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Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits: progress made, challenges and opportunities

Statement submitted by the Virtue Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

On September 10, 2004, Virtue Foundation and the United Nations NGO Section of DESA hosted the 3rd annual multidisciplinary symposium commemorating the anniversary of 9/11 in the Trusteeship Council Chamber in New York. While the first two commemorative symposia examined the resilience and triumph of the human spirit in the context of the overwhelmingly unified response to the attacks of September 11, *"Healing the World: The Ethical Dimension of Globalization and Interdependence in an Age of Terror"* focused on the rights and responsibilities that accompany the close ties forged by globalization. A truly collaborative undertaking, the symposium brought together representatives from the Permanent Missions of Australia, Singapore, Switzerland, and Uruguay to the United Nations, as well as the Consulate General of Switzerland in New York, the International Rescue Committee, Refugees International, FilmAid International, Standard & Poor's, and the Nour Foundation.

Conceived in the wake of 9/11, Virtue Foundation is a public charity and NGO committed to raising awareness of prevalent global issues while initiating public discourse on rights and responsibilities within the global community from an ethical, moral, and humanitarian perspective. The Foundation is also involved in the sponsorship and deployment of medical missions to underdeveloped regions of the world, as well as the education and training of physicians and nurses committed to returning to such regions upon the completion of their training. Through its extensive educational and humanitarian efforts, the Foundation seeks to engender inner change and transformation at an individual, grassroots level and to dispel the ignorance and fear that fuel the cultural and socioeconomic divide, building instead a true spirit of cooperation and interdependence among citizens of all nations.

As an NGO with special consultative status to the United Nations ECOSOC Council, Virtue Foundation is dedicated to working toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals and implementing the outcomes of the many major United Nations conferences and summits. *"Healing the World: The Ethical Dimension of Globalization and Interdependence in an Age of Terror"* thus focused discussion around the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and the necessity of the greater role of the United Nations in our increasingly globalized world.

The daylong symposium featured two panel discussions and several keynote speakers, including Under-Secretaries-General José Antonio Ocampo and Shashi Tharoor, as well as a keynote address by U.N. Chief of Staff Mark Malloch Brown. Focusing on different albeit equally critical issues related to global security and stability, the morning panel moderated by CNN's Paula Zahn examined the difficult balance between ensuring national security and protecting civil liberties, while the afternoon panel led by Refugees International President Ken Bacon focused on the U.N. Millennium Development Goals in general and the far-reaching ramifications of alleviating extreme poverty in particular.

After a lively exchange of compelling and diverse viewpoints, the following conclusions emerged from the distinguished panellists and speakers:

- In seeking the proper balance between national security and civil liberties, it is essential to acknowledge and recognize the existence of core universal values that underlie all cultures, all countries, and all systems of governance. The recognition of these values must

constitute as much a point of debate and departure in such discussions as any hostile force or individuals seeking to do us harm, or any challenges that we collectively confront as a people or a nation.

- Defeating the scourge of terrorism in the 21st century mandates a collective and interdependent effort, with the United Nations best suited to be at the forefront of the promulgation and promotion of democracy, good governance, and human rights. At the same time, the United Nations must lead the global effort to address the economic, social, cultural, and political inequities that drive terrorism.

- To fulfil its critical role of building a peaceful, prosperous, and inclusive world for all citizens, the United Nations must undergo significant reforms to better meet the greater challenges of the post Cold War era and the world post September 11. These reforms should include a restructuring of the Security Council, which no longer reflects modern realities of global power, and the Human Rights Commission.

- To effectively respond to the threat of global terrorism and the unprecedented attacks on innocent civilians and non-combatants, the United Nations should adopt a definition of terrorism as any act intended to kill or harm civilians or non-combatants with the aim of intimidating governments or international organizations. In so doing, the United Nations will send a clear message to the world community that terrorist attacks are an unacceptable and ineffective way of advancing any cause.

- As terrorism is a global phenomenon that victimizes all nations on some level, the United Nations should appoint an independent commission to establish a global protocol for responding to terrorist attacks and related security issues. Such a protocol would eliminate localized responses by individual nation states and replace it with a unified and consistent approach to acts of terrorism.

- As many of the worst atrocities are rationalized, if not wholly justified, on the basis that they are carried out in furtherance of God's will, the United Nations should initiate an effort to establish a unique forum for specifically addressing and mediating religious grievances and conflicts. Such a forum would legitimize genuine religious disputes while exposing and marginalizing religious fundamentalists who revert to terror to advance their cause.

- Significant progress has been made toward fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals, which are essential to ensuring global peace and stability due to the direct link between poverty, lack of development, and security. Continued success toward achieving these goals will require the collaborative effort of governmental institutions, the private sector, and non-profit civil society organizations working closely together.

As Under-Secretary-General José Antonio Ocampo eloquently stated at the outset of the symposium: "We must take every opportunity to engage in exchanges such as this, to highlight and reinforce the principles that uplift and advance the human spirit and form the foundations for constructing a global ethics that will ensure the future of a globalized world." In line with the symposium's key findings, the United Nations has now released two instrumental documents:

"In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All" and *"A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility, Report of the High-Level Panel on Threat, Challenges and Change,"* which seek to address many of the collective recommendations set forth at Virtue Foundation's Annual Symposium *"Healing the World: The Ethical Dimension of Globalization and Interdependence in an Age of Terror."*